



# Higher Education Review of University of Central Lancashire

March 2015

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the [University of Central Lancashire](#) (the University). The review took place from 2 to 6 March 2015 and was conducted by a team of six reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Susan Blake
- Emeritus Professor Andrew Downton
- Professor David Lamburn
- Ms Hilary Placito
- Professor Graham Romp
- Mr Christopher Maidment (student reviewer)

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the University of Central Lancashire and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing the University of Central Lancashire the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)<sup>4</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review web pages: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about the University of Central Lancashire

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the University of Central Lancashire.

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the University of Central Lancashire.

- The implementation of the Digital Shift project that enhances the student learning experience (Expectation B3).
- The availability of international study opportunities for all students (Expectation B3).
- The embedded approach to widening participation, employability and internationalisation (Expectations B4, B1, B2, B3).
- The effective role of the University in supporting its partners (Expectation B10).
- The enhanced accessibility of quality assurance materials through the document management platform (Expectation C).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the University of Central Lancashire.

By September 2015:

- ensure the accuracy of the terms of reference of the quality assurance committees and the associated documentary guidance (Expectation A2.1)
- ensure the consistent implementation of the revised policy on personal tutoring (Expectation B4)
- systematically involve students in the annual monitoring and review of courses (Expectation B8)
- ensure the accuracy of information regarding the status of qualifications delivered at UCLan (Cyprus) (Expectation C).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the University of Central Lancashire is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The steps being taken to revise programme specifications including intended learning outcomes for interim exit awards (Expectation A1).
- The steps being taken to review the Student Voice (Expectation B5).

## Theme: Student Employability

Employability is embedded within the University's activities and is integral to course design and approval. Opportunities for structured work experience are built into the University's programmes. The University has attracted Higher Education Academy money to run a programme of academic staff development around the integration of employability into the curriculum. The strength of the University's links with industry is recognised by external examiners.

Employer links are used to provide projects, internships and work placements. This includes international placements made accessible through travel bursaries including opportunities to study at the University's Cyprus campus. International employability is supported through the University's 'Worldwise' centre, providing language study support. All students are able to access free language courses.

The University hosts the UK's largest Volunteering Centre, accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management. This enables more than 2,500 students to undertake volunteering opportunities. The initiative has also led to students visiting for example Sochi University to deliver workshops on volunteering initiatives. Students are offered the opportunity to undertake leadership courses through several programmes. The University has launched and expanded a programme of graduate internships, including a structured programme in employability and enterprise. The University offers either a paid internship or free postgraduate course to any graduate not in graduate level employment.

The University hosts a business incubation unit offering students and graduates, wishing to start their own businesses, access to training and financial support. The University has reviewed and expanded its Careers Service with a renewed emphasis on working with students from the earliest possible opportunity.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review](#).

## About the University of Central Lancashire

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) traces its origins back to 1828, with the founding of the Preston Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge. The Institution developed into Harris College in 1956, Preston Polytechnic in 1973, Lancashire Polytechnic in 1984 and the University of Central Lancashire in 1992. Its distinctive mission is to promote access to excellence in higher education for all students with the ability to benefit.

The University has approximately 31,000 students studying across all UCLan campuses and partner institutions of whom 22,821 are based in Preston. The University intends to change the profile of its student population through an increase in the proportion of postgraduate students, international students and those undertaking continuing professional development as part of lifelong learning.

The University has a network of further education colleges and provides full and part-time higher education opportunities for students in the North West region, as well as further afield for some specialist provision. More recently, it has extended its collaborative work in the UK to include partnership arrangements with specialist private training providers. Approximately 5,000 students are currently studying on UCLan awards through 29 UK partners.

The University has 2,700 students studying with partners in 13 countries in addition to around 1,800 international students on campus in Preston. The University has approximately 2,800 staff.

Since the previous QAA review visits and mid-cycle follow-up, the University has expanded its central campus base in Preston, and has established campuses in Burnley, at Westlakes in West Cumbria and in Cyprus. The Burnley Campus opened in September 2009 and UCLan Cyprus opened in October 2012.

Curriculum developments at the Preston campus include architecture, undergraduate dentistry and postgraduate medicine. The General Medical Council (GMC) has recently approved UCLan's application for an independent Medical School. The University plans to offer the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB BS) from September 2015 at its Preston and Burnley campuses.

The University has revised its academic structures with the introduction, in August 2014, of four colleges headed by an Executive Dean and comprising a number of constituent Schools. Committees have also been established at college level in alignment with University level committees with representation from each of the constituent schools.

Recent international developments include new strategic partners in China and Mauritius. The partnership between UCLan and Hebei University (HBU) led to the formation of a joint HBU/UCLan School of Media, Communication and Creative Industries.

The University was subject to an Institutional Audit in November 2008 and an Audit of Collaborative Provision in December 2009 and to a review of Transnational Education in China in 2012. The Institutional Audit report included two advisable recommendations: the Audit of Collaborative Provision report included three desirable recommendations and the review of Transnational Education report included two recommendations.

The review team considered the progress made by the University in implementing the recommendation and concluded that they have all been satisfactorily addressed.

Two of the reports also contained a number of good practices. The review team concludes that progression of the areas of good practice had been undertaken implicitly, but the evidence presented contained little explicit information about how they had been implemented or disseminated in the University.

## Explanation of the findings about the University of Central Lancashire

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

## 1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

**Expectation (A1):** In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

**a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* are met by:**

- positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications
- awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes

**b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics**

**c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework**

**d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards**

### Findings

1.1 The University positions all of its awards, both internally and at its partner institutions, at the appropriate level of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Its Academic Regulations use the FHEQ as a key reference point. Alignment of courses with the FHEQ is a key requirement for course development, approval and periodic review. For new courses, external advisers and, for existing courses, external examiners are required to confirm that the standards set for qualifications are consistent with the FHEQ. In order to give further assurance that its policies and procedures are applied, the Academic Audit Panel conducts targeted audits.

1.2 Appropriate contextualisation enables the University to align its qualifications with frameworks applicable in other jurisdictions. The Academic Regulations map titles of awards against the FHEQ in order to ensure alignment. Guidance on qualification characteristics is taken into account at the course development stage. The Course Developer's Guide provides guidance on mapping intended learning outcomes against the FHEQ levels and takes into account published guidance on qualification characteristics. In addition, the University requires all programme specifications to reference the relevant applicable Subject Benchmark Statements, which inform the design and development of new courses.

Similar requirements apply to professional body requirements and the external examiner report template asks for comments on the relationship of the course to Subject Benchmark Statements and professional body standards.

1.3 The University has a modular framework which defines a minimum credit attainment for its courses. This is aligned with the Higher Education Credit Framework for England. The Academic Regulations specify the award requirements in terms of level and credit attainment. Academic awards at the University's campus in Cyprus incorporate the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme.

1.4 The University has clear regulations and appropriate policies and procedures which allow Expectation A1 to be met in theory.

1.5 The review team met a number of relevant staff and considered a range of documentation as part of the evidence presented by the University. The documentation includes: processes for approval and review of courses; examples of completed submissions and reports; templates of and completed external examiner reports; documentation relevant to courses provided in partnership with collaborative partners.

1.6 Staff at both the University and partner institutions have a broad understanding of the external reference points and of the operation of the University's processes for approval, review and monitoring of courses. They are well supported by the Academic Quality and Awards office and the guidance provided through its officers and documentation.

1.7 Examination of the documentation supplied to the review team supports the robust way in which the University uses the FHEQ within its approval, review and examination processes. The expectations of the Quality Code are referenced in the Academic Quality Assurance (AQA) Manual; the Academic Regulations map awards against the FHEQ and staff are provided with appropriate guidance to ensure that generic learning outcomes, professional body and subject specific requirements are taken into account at the time of course approval and review. Completed examples of programme specifications, course approval and review documentation seen by the review team confirm that the University's requirements are being met and that there is appropriate alignment with the FHEQ and other external reference points.

1.8 The review team was able to confirm that assessment strategies are appropriate for the awards at the relevant level and that final qualifications are awarded against the achievement of defined learning outcomes. The University is revising its programme specification template in order to include intended learning outcomes for interim exit qualifications. The University intends to approve such qualifications on a rolling programme with effect from September 2015. Under the current process, the mapping of module learning outcomes against those at the course level provides security of the integrity of such awards. The review team **affirms** the steps the University is taking for the revision of programme specifications to include intended learning outcomes for interim exit awards.

1.9 External examiners' reports confirm that the standards of all University awards are appropriate and take account of relevant external reference points.

1.10 The review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University implements and monitors its procedures effectively.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.11 The University maintains oversight of the quality and standards of its provision through its committee structure. Following a review of its governance structures, the University introduced a revised structure from the start of the 2014-15 academic year.

1.12 The Academic Board is the most senior University committee with responsibility for academic governance and is empowered to determine the governance and management frameworks for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Three main committees report to the Academic Board: the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee (ASQAC), the Student Experience Committee (SEC) and the Research and Innovation Committee (RIC), all of which have approved terms of reference.

1.13 The Academic Board delegates to Assessment Boards responsibility for assessment of students in accordance with the Academic Regulations, and to University Review Panels the approval and review of courses. The ASQAC has delegated authority to determine, among other things, procedures and regulations governing standards and quality. In turn ASQAC delegates to the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee its responsibilities to consider any required changes to academic regulations.

1.14 University Review Panels (URP) have power from the Academic Board to approve and review courses and a URP Chairs' Group reviews, reports and makes recommendations to ASQAC on the outcomes of course approval and review events in accordance with its terms of reference. Course Approval Panels, with membership which includes representatives of the URP Chairs' Group, deal with the course approval stage. A Course Planning Committee (CPC) has delegated authority from the Academic Board to maintain a strategic overview of the institution's academic portfolio and approve the business case for new courses while, for collaborations, the Collaborative Sub-Committee (CSC) has delegated authority from the ASQAC to recommend the approval of new partnership arrangements.

1.15 In August 2014, the University introduced a new college structure, each college bringing together schools within broadly cognate areas of activity. In turn this necessitated changes to the academic governance structure which became effective at the commencement of the 2014-15 academic year. The aim was to improve the working of processes and their effectiveness to overcome a lack of synergy between institutional and school level structures. Under previous arrangements individual schools determined their own academic governance arrangements.

1.16 From the start of 2014-15, college committees were introduced which mirror the three main committees of the Academic Board. The exception to this structure relates to the School of Medicine and Dentistry. Although based outside of the College structure its committees mirror it.

1.17 Governance arrangements relating to the University's Cyprus campus mirror those of the institution's Academic Board Committee structure and a representative from UCLan (Cyprus) sits on each of the Academic Board committees.

1.18 The University's requirements for its taught and research degrees are set out in its Academic Regulations. These are approved by its Academic Board and contain a list of the awards which may be conferred. New awards may be approved on the advice of the ASQAC and new courses may not be submitted for approval prior to the approval of an appropriate defined award.

1.19 An Academic Regulations Sub-Committee, reporting through the ASQAC meets termly to keep the regulations under continuous review and to advise and recommend amendments. The process for review and updating is effective.

1.20 The regulations set out the institution's modular framework, provisions around the admission of students and registration, the assessment of students, how academic credit and qualifications are awarded, progression requirements within courses and degree classification.

1.21 The University's regulations and its governance structure enable Expectation A2.1 to be met in theory.

1.22 The review team met staff and students and considered a range of evidence provided by the University, including relevant documented policies and procedures, terms of reference and minutes of committees and meetings.

1.23 The University has a governance framework designed to ensure that it can discharge its responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities. The University's Academic Board is the senior academic authority, operating through its committees. Consideration of the minutes and papers of the committees confirmed that responsibilities were being fulfilled. Although the academic governance structure is complex, staff understand the framework, procedures and policies and it is effective in its operations.

1.24 The college committees, which mirror those of the Academic Board, were established at the commencement of the current academic year. The review team examined the available minutes of the college-level meetings, which revealed some initial uncertainties expressed by members relating to the relationships between committees, communication mechanisms and impact. However, consideration of further minutes supplied during the review visit indicated a better flow of communication between schools and University committees.

1.25 The review team noted the use of some potentially misleading terminology in the terms of reference of some committees and inaccuracy in some associated guidance. It also noted that the University has embedded mechanisms to review the effectiveness of its committees and an intention to review aspects of its academic governance at the end of the current academic year. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the University ensures the accuracy of the terms of reference of the quality assurance committees and the associated documentary guidance.

1.26 The University's academic frameworks and regulations are consistent with the relevant national frameworks. The University has rigorous policies for the provision of credit transfer, advanced standing and the recognition of prior learning and sets out the limits on the volume of credit which may be awarded through such processes. Provisions for the award of credit, the application of consistent rules relating to extenuating circumstances,

compensation where a student fails an element of assessment, grading and classification are clearly defined. Consideration of a sample of minutes of assessment boards across a range of courses, confirmed that boards apply the University's regulations in a systematic and consistent manner. External examiners attend assessment boards and provide further assurance that the University's standards are met.

1.27 Staff whom the review team met (including those at partner organisations) are conversant with the University's policies and processes relating to assessment and Chairs of assessment boards are trained. Students are aware of the University's requirements and references to appropriate sections of the regulations are contained in student handbooks. The University's academic frameworks and regulations are accessible to relevant stakeholders.

1.28 The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University has comprehensive and transparent academic frameworks and regulations which are effective in securing academic standards.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.29 Definitive information on course aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements is given in the programme specification and student handbooks. The key documents comprising the definitive record of each qualification are contained in the programme specification and the module descriptors. The programme specification provides a record of the course aims, intended learning outcomes, assessment and teaching strategies, credit structure and reference to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. A curriculum skills map enables students to be aware of the modules which assess the programme learning outcomes. Module descriptors detail the aims, content, learning outcomes, assessment methods and criteria, assessment strategies and scheduled learning and teaching activities. These documents are required for the course approval and reapproval processes. The University provides clear guidance on the development of programme specifications and on module level descriptors.

1.30 A central repository of the definitive record is maintained by the Academic Quality and Awards Office, which is updated when changes are made and to which academic and support staff have access for monitoring and review processes. This also contains information relating to courses delivered with partners. External examiners will have access at a future date and the University is piloting an approach to enable this. In addition, programme specifications are available on the University's website, while module descriptors are available to students through the University's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.31 The University has clear policies and procedures for making changes to the definitive record, whether major or minor, and which are made through due process.

1.32 Student handbooks containing definitive information follow a standard template. Compliance with the University's requirements is monitored.

1.33 The University has appropriate and robust approaches to the provision and maintenance of a definitive record which allows Expectation A2.2 to be met in theory.

1.34 The review team met students and staff and was supplied with a range of information to support the University's approach to meeting the expectation. This included guidance on quality assurance procedures for approval, monitoring and review; programme specifications and module descriptors; and student handbooks.

1.35 The evidence seen by the review team explicitly stipulated the definitive information the University requires and the means by which it is approved. This is reinforced through the use of templates for programme specifications, course descriptors, and approval and review processes. The process for modification is clear and all relevant documentation is scrutinised during periodic review. Students confirmed in meetings that they had full access to all information about their course and modules and understood the learning outcomes, and methods and criteria for assessment. The definitive records are used by teaching and support staff and external examiners and assessors in assessment and review processes.

The University's website, VLE and samples of handbooks provided to students confirm that the definitive documents are available to stakeholders and serve as a definitive reference point. However, the review team noted one instance where there were some reported delays in the updating of one learning outcome contained in the programme specification.

1.36 The review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University effectively implements its policies and processes to ensure that there are definitive records of courses, modules and qualifications which are maintained and are accessible to staff and students and other relevant stakeholders.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards***

**Findings**

1.37 The University has clear processes for the approval of taught courses. The approval and re-approval processes require that the business rationale is considered independently from the academic merits of the proposed course for both on-campus and collaborative provision. New course proposals are first considered by the CPC which provides University strategic oversight and examines the proposed business case. Collaborative proposals are also scrutinised by the CSC, which includes institutional approval and due diligence of a new partner.

1.38 Once outline approval has been granted detailed consideration of the academic issues is undertaken by an independent Course Approval Panel comprising internal staff members, external advisers and, where possible, a representative of the Students' Union (SU). Academic Board has delegated the approval and reapproval of courses to this Panel. The purpose of course approval is to provide peer review which ensures that all courses delivered by the University meet a quality threshold and comply with the Academic Regulations of the University.

1.39 Internal members of the approval panel are drawn from staff on the URP. A briefing event is held for all new panel members before they undertake the role. The Chairs of approval panels are briefed by the Academic Quality and Awards Office prior to taking on the more senior role.

1.40 For existing courses which are to be approved for delivery at a partner institution, the current or previous external examiner is asked to undertake the role of external adviser. Their role is to provide advice to the panel on the partner's ability to deliver the course in line with threshold criteria.

1.41 Research Degree Tutors (RDT) are responsible for approving a postgraduate research programme of work and the required training appropriate to the target award within the timeframe set out in the Academic Regulations. In establishing the academic probity of the research programme, one or more referees is appointed to review each application. In approving the programme of work, the RDT confirms the official supervisory team and that the project can be completed by the expected submission point. The RDT also confirms that the project operates within an appropriate governance framework and that the school has confirmed the availability of required resources.

1.42 Research programme approval and supervision arrangements are reported through the college RICs. RDTs are also responsible for approving the research component of Professional Doctorate courses, professional awards in the fields of medicine and dentistry and awards by published work.

1.43 The policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation A3.1 to be met in theory.

1.44 The review team scrutinised the University's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, programme specifications, module descriptors, approval reports and meetings with staff and students.

1.45 University processes related to the approval of taught programmes and research degrees draw effectively upon the Quality Code with formal checks systematically made against relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ.

1.46 The evidence considered by the review team confirms that University approval processes effectively and consistently ensure that the proposed learning outcomes are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor in the FHEQ, that consideration is made of the guidance on qualification characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements and that any credit awarded aligns with Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Guidance on Academic Credit Arrangements in Higher Education in England. The approval process provides effective assurance that the proposed assessment methodology adequately tests the intended learning outcomes. The programme specification and module descriptors are rigorously scrutinised through the approval process and become the definitive record of the programme.

1.47 Evidence scrutinised by the review team confirms that the University approval processes provide a rigorous and consistent check that programmes meet or exceed the UK threshold academic standards.

1.48 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University implements rigorous processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees to ensure that academic standards are appropriately set.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:**

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.49 The regulations for assessment are set out in the Academic Regulations which are overseen by the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee. Further detail of process is in an Assessment Handbook. Design and approval of modules is based on the AQA Manual, which is updated annually by the Academic Quality and Awards Office. These, together with the course approval process provide coverage of credit definition and levels, UK threshold standards and the University's academic standards.

1.50 In designing and approving programmes and modules, programme outcomes and module learning outcomes are routinely set. This is provided for in pro forma standard documentation for programme specifications and module descriptors which refer to relevant provisions of the UK threshold academic standards, and the University's own standards. The Programme Specification template requires learning outcomes and associated assessment methods to be specified and the completion of a curriculum map to relate programme outcomes to modules. Guidance Notes for Programme Specifications include coverage of learning outcomes and curriculum maps, as do guidance notes for course teams preparing new programmes.

1.51 The threshold criteria for course approval specifically includes learning outcomes and the assessment process. Formal approval is at a course approval panel event where the Academic Quality and Awards office advises and an external adviser is present. The Programme Specification Template has not in the past specified learning outcomes for all exit points and awards, but the University is working towards doing this. The curriculum map and module descriptors show what is relevant.

1.52 Academic Board has overall authority and responsibility for the approval of learning outcomes. ASQAC is a subcommittee of Academic Board and is responsible for the procedures to assure quality and standards.

1.53 The module descriptor requires the specification of the assessment strategy. Module descriptors set out module aims and assessment methods. An appendix to the module descriptor sets out the learning plan which provides more detail of learning and teaching and the assessment strategy. Programme specifications and module descriptors are available to all staff through the document management platform for the setting of assessments. Training is available for staff in relation to writing assessments and devising marking criteria. Detailed guidance on assessment, including assessment criteria, is available to students through Student Handbooks. Detailed guidance on the assessment of a particular module is provided in a Module Information Pack.

1.54 Assessment Boards report to Academic Board. Assessment Boards operate under clear arrangements. Chairs are approved and briefed to ensure that the University's



standards are applied consistently. There is coherent administrative support and data for boards is provided centrally.

1.55 An external examiner is appointed for each course and makes an annual report on standards. This specifically includes comments on the alignment with UK academic standards. It may also include comments on matters such as learning outcomes and assessment criteria. ASQAC has responsibility for procedures for the appointment of external examiners and the consideration of external examiners' reports.

1.56 For collaborative provision, all University awards are subject to the University's Academic Regulations. The processes outlined above are followed by partners. Some partners offer the same programmes and modules offered on the Preston campus and therefore use the same assessment with arrangements being made to ensure it takes place at the same time in the case of an examination. Any variation in assessment is agreed on approval with a variation in the assessment strategy specified in the appendix to the module descriptor. Partner Assessment Boards are Chaired by a member of the University staff although, for validated provision, a member of partner staff may Chair the board with a member of the University staff in attendance. The same external examiner is responsible for the course wherever it is delivered.

1.57 There is a separate process for the approval and assessment of research degrees with appropriate attention paid to relevant standards.

1.58 The rules, policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation A3.2 to be met in theory.

1.59 The review team studied documents relating to programme and module approval and to assessment processes, including a range of external examiner reports. The review team met staff involved in programme approval and in setting and marking assessments and the working of Assessment Boards. The review team also spoke to students in relation to their experience of assessment.

1.60 The review team found that the University has a clear process for defining and setting learning outcomes on programme approval and for transferring those outcomes into assessment tasks and criteria. This process takes into account UK threshold standards and the University sets its own standards. The process is well embedded and reasonably understood by staff and students. External advisers input into the development of learning outcomes, and embedding employability. Assessment Boards are run in a secure way. Externality is clearly present in both programme approval and through the use of external examiners.

1.61 Threshold criteria are clearly considered at course approval events with specific reference to matters such as the FHEQ. Programme specifications seen by the review team all included appropriate learning outcomes. The University noted some past problems with learning outcomes not being properly described but these have been addressed. Conditions imposed on approval may include amending learning outcomes and assessment criteria to ensure they are appropriate. A range of programme specifications and module descriptors seen by the review team showed the mapping of programme learning outcomes to module learning outcomes. Similar evidence was seen in relation to partner programme approval and for programme re-approval.

1.62 The review team saw evidence of specific consideration of the equivalency of assessment methods, consistency of marking standards on course approval. Although module descriptors must remain the same where existing modules are adopted, there can be appropriate variation in assessment regimes. There is a good range of assessment

methods used on many courses including a focus on practical methods of assessment where relevant.

1.63 Staff and students met by the review team expressed the view that assessment processes were clear with students saying they knew where to find learning outcomes and guidance on assessment and grading. However, students also expressed a view that there could be more clarity in articulating feedback and assessment.

1.64 There was a review of Assessment Board minutes in 2013-14. This led to recommendations and training, and assessment board data and minutes seen by the review team appeared sound.

1.65 A range of external examiner reports seen by the review team expressed specific support for the standards set and achieved in assessment and the equivalence of those standards to external norms. While there were minor comments on matters such as the use of criteria and evidence of internal moderation there is no evidence of significant concerns as regards standards or process that are not addressed.

1.66 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.67 The University undertakes annual monitoring, interim review and periodic review of courses. External examiners are appointed to all University courses and are required to complete an annual reporting template which explicitly asks whether the standards set for the awards are appropriate in relation to the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and professional/statutory body regulations.

1.68 All taught courses and research degree courses are reviewed each year, as part of the annual monitoring process. For taught courses this requires course teams to explicitly analyse and comment on external examiner reports, student feedback and quantitative data relating to student performance. The Dean and RDTs produce separate reports on the operation of research degree programmes operating within the schools.

1.69 Interim review provides an opportunity for course teams to undertake an appraisal of a course after its first year of operation. This is mandatory for programmes delivered by a new collaborative partner. An interim review of an existing course may also take place at any time if the Dean of School or URP Chair agrees it would be beneficial. The process focuses on how academic standards are maintained and the evaluation of student feedback.

1.70 Periodic course review (PCR) and re-approval of courses takes place on a five to six year cycle according to an agreed schedule. As with course approval, a panel is drawn from internal staff members in addition to at least one external adviser. PCR is designed to assure the University that academic standards are maintained, that the course and course-related documentation reflect the expectations of external bodies and is consistent with University requirements.

1.71 The policies and procedures of the University allow expectation A3.3 to be met in theory.

1.72 The review team scrutinised the University's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of its quality assurance procedures, documentation related to annual monitoring, interim review and periodic review and through meetings with staff and students.

1.73 The University effectively draws upon a broad range of internal and external information including data on student retention and attainment. The monitoring and review processes effectively use this and other qualitative and quantitative management information to secure academic standards.

1.74 The monitoring and review processes provide rigorous and systematic assurance that academic standards are being maintained, that programmes are delivered in accordance with what was approved and that the currency of the programme is periodically reviewed and enhanced. The University also has embedded and effective processes for reviewing its monitoring and review processes and for sharing good practice.

1.75 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University implements rigorous and effective monitoring and review processes that ensure that academic standards are being achieved and maintained.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:**

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.76 For each course approval, at least one external advisor is appointed. The panel also includes a senior member of staff from another school. To ensure externality is in place, the documentation includes provision for the nomination of two external advisers. The external adviser makes written comments and attends the approval event. The only exception is for a fast track approval which requires rapid approval, for example, where external funding requires a rapid response.

1.77 There are separate standard forms for external advisers for different types of course approval (for example off campus) and for periodic review. The external adviser report form notes the importance of external advice and makes specific reference to subject benchmarks, the FHEQ and professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements. The importance of equivalence of standards is stressed, and, where relevant, the context of potential progression to the University noted. The external adviser is specifically asked to comment on the appropriateness of the standards set, whether the aims and outcomes of the programme articulate with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the assessment strategy and learning outcomes and the resources

1.78 Where an articulation agreement related to a specific course is approved, sign-off by the relevant external examiner is sought. The external examiner will also sign off the mapping of an external qualification to a University course. There is also provision for externality in interim reviews.

1.79 For periodic course review, the external adviser makes written comments and attends the review event. This includes periodic review at an overseas partner. The external adviser comments specifically on course aims, learning outcomes and assessment.

1.80 For the assessment of learning outcomes, external examiners play a key role in relation to standards. External examiner nominations are made by the relevant school, with the Academic Quality and Awards Office checking that the individual meets set criteria. The Chair of ASQAC decides if there is any disagreement as to whether a person nominated is appropriate. The same external examiner will cover a programme delivered on different sites as part of overseeing equivalence of standards, noting any differences as regards assessment and standards between sites as is specifically noted on the report form. There is written guidance and briefing for external examiners with specific additional guidance for research postgraduate students and overseas provision.

1.81 A University external examiner oversees the reports made and University responses. An annual overview report on external examiner reports goes to ASQAC. External advisers are generally asked to complete feedback forms.

1.82 The policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation A3.4 to be met in theory.

1.83 The review team read a range of course approval and course review documents, and a range of documents and reports relating to external examining. The review team talked to staff about the use of externality.

1.84 The review team found the appointment and use of externality in programme approval and review to be robust, with appropriate externals appointed, written reports completed in reasonable detail and the comments of externals being taken into account in reports. Completed written external reports seen by the review team were completed in full, noting strengths and raising any concerns. Staff confirmed that external advisers and examiners took part in all course approval and periodic review events. This might include professional body externals where relevant. Patients had also been consulted in relation to a recent health focused approval.

1.85 There is oversight of the input from external advisers in programme approval and review. The annual report that goes to ASQAC includes positive comments on the rigour of the process and suggestions made.

1.86 External examiners reports deal appropriately and robustly with matters relating to standards, with examples of external recommendations being followed up. There is oversight of externality in that an overview of external examiner reports for a year goes to ASQAC. This is strengthened by the use of an institutional external examiner.

1.87 Standard forms invite all externals to comment on alignment with UK threshold academic standards and degree-awarding bodies' own standards.

1.88 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because appropriate policies and processes are in place in relation to externality and these are appropriately implemented.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.89 In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.90 All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and risk is judged low. There is one recommendation which indicates that the University should ensure the accuracy of the terms of reference of the quality assurance committees and the associated documentary guidance. An affirmation is made for one Expectation which confirms the steps being taken to revise programme specifications including intended learning outcomes for interim exit awards.

1.91 The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of academic standards **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 The University provides clear and comprehensive guidance to course teams on course design including the use of external reference points such as the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. The University has developed clear threshold criteria against which course proposals are assessed within the approval process. These specifically include guidance on designing appropriate learning outcomes, assessment methods and the provision of learning resources. The process for course approval is the same for both on campus and collaborative provision, with additional requirements in place for the approval of new partners.

2.2 The University has clear processes for the approval of courses that seek to ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and that students are provided with high quality learning opportunities. New course proposals are first considered by the CPC which provides University strategic oversight and examines the proposed business case. Collaborative proposals are also scrutinised by the CSC which includes due diligence of a new partner.

2.3 Once outline approval has been granted, detailed consideration of the academic issues are undertaken by an independent Course Approval Panel comprising internal members, at least one external adviser and, where possible, a representative of the Students' Union. A formal report of the course approval is produced that confirms the name of the programme and the period of approval until the next scheduled review. The approval panel may specify conditions and/or recommendations. Conditions are required to be satisfied before a course can commence delivery. Recommendations consist of advice which the course team may wish to consider for the future development of the course. Responses to recommendations are followed up through the annual monitoring and review processes.

2.4 The University has an agreed mechanism for approving delivery of University courses by University staff at non-University sites (off campus delivery) or for approving the delivery of an existing course at a University campus.

2.5 The policies and procedures of the University allow expectation B1 to be met in theory.

2.6 The review team scrutinised the University's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of its quality assurance procedures, documentation related to programme design, development and approval and through meetings with staff and students.

2.7 The evidence reviewed confirms that the course design and approval processes are systematically and consistently implemented.



2.8 The University's Course Developer's Guide provides detailed and comprehensive information and advice on course development, including clear criteria against which the course proposal is considered during the approval process. The use of this document contributes to the University effectively embedding its approach to widening participation, employability and internationalisation within programme design and approval and this leads to the **good practice** in Expectation B4.

2.9 The University makes rigorous and systematic use of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements in the design and approval of new programmes. The University also makes appropriate use of external advisers in the approval process. Separate guidance packs are provided for internal URP members and external advisers on the course approval process and their respective roles.

2.10 The operation of the course approval process is reviewed annually, drawing on feedback from participants, and a report is provided to the URP and the Academic Quality and Awards office outlining any recommendations for change. The report also includes aspects of good practice, which are included in the report, are disseminated to schools through the Quality Leads and the college ASQAC meetings. The University has recently agreed that all course approvals and reapprovals for Preston campus courses should take place before the end of January of the year in which recruits commences. This ensures sufficient time to ensure all conditions are met prior to student recruitment and for the programme to be appropriately marketed.

2.11 The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University implements effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission***

**Findings**

2.12 The University's admissions policy derives from its Mission to promote access to excellence and, in particular, strand 1 of its institutional strategy to increase recruitment, widen participation and improve retention of undergraduate students. The Admissions Policy and Code of Practice defines expected practice, general entry requirements, selection procedures, international and partnership arrangements, accreditation of prior learning (APL) for credit, staff training, monitoring and review processes and complaints and appeals processes for applicants. General entry requirements are defined in the University's academic regulations, with the determination of detailed academic entry requirements being the responsibility of the College's admissions teams.

2.13 Undergraduate admissions are processed centrally through the Admissions office for Home/EU applicants and the International office for overseas applicants, with full-time undergraduate applications received through UCAS. Applications for other courses, including postgraduate taught and research, are processed through the University's online application system. The University's partners are responsible for recruitment to collaborative courses which are either listed in the partner's UCAS listing or in the University's listing. Liaison between the University's admissions team and partners takes place to confirm acceptance of partners' applicants and also to cross-refer University applicants to partners where appropriate.

2.14 Marketing and recruitment activity has recently been revised to recognise the increasing role of online information, including the University website, social media and email in influencing student application and choice, and now provides a more consistent journey from enquiry to application to acceptance and induction. Information on the processes of application and admission to the University's courses is provided through a range of media including the University website, Key Information Sets (KIS), applicant webpages, printed prospectuses, open days and applicant days, Higher Education Fairs and UCAS events, postgraduate fairs and, off-campus, international recruitment events, schools/colleges talks, social media, advertising and promotional material and on external websites such as UCAS and Prospects.

2.15 The University's Admissions Policy and Code of Practice allow Expectation B2 to be met in theory.

2.16 The review team tested the operation and effectiveness of the University's admission, recruitment and selection procedures by examining the information available for students and staff involved in the admissions process and through meetings with students, academic and support staff, and staff at partner institutions.

2.17 There is an increasingly strategic approach to student recruitment through revised course development processes submitted to the University's CPC. Up to now, not all new courses have recruited successfully, and so the University now includes primary market research on all new course proposals including analysis of UCAS/HESA data. The admissions policy was most recently reviewed in September 2014 by the Head of

Admissions and Director of International Admissions. Revisions are approved by the Chair of ASQAC.

2.18 Reliable and accurate processing of admissions applications is ensured by a combination of subject aligned central admissions staff working with academic admissions tutors who provide specialist academic advice and decisions. A list of current academic admissions tutors is kept by the Admissions office, although this doesn't include records of when staff were appointed to the admissions role or confirmation of their training record. Teaching staff the review team met reported varied experiences of initial training for their role, albeit with clear evidence of systematic update training to cover changes such as to UCAS tariffs, clearing arrangements, and adjustment. Admissions decisions are recorded using the University's student records/admissions system and a paper record is sent to schools.

2.19 Students with whom the review team met, including students from partner institutions, were universally satisfied with the information provided to them as part of the applications and admissions processes and that it was accurate and reliable. Transparent entry requirements were apparent from the prospectus and the review team's review of Programme Specifications. The University is taking initiatives to improve the transition into higher education through Student First, Flying Start (for care leavers) and other initiatives, as part of its overall strategy to improve widening participation, retention, progression and achievement and this leads to the good practice as set out in section B4.

2.20 The anonymised spreadsheet of complaints and appeals relating to admissions applications, providing date, case details and outcomes for the last three years does not currently include data on the time taken to respond to admissions complaints or appeals, nor is the data included with the summary reports on academic complaints and appeals that are submitted annually to the Student Experience Committee (see also section B9), which would increase academic visibility and oversight of admissions.

2.21 The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University's Admissions Policy and Code of Practice is systematically followed by admissions staff and admissions tutors across the University and in regional and international partners.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.22 The University's strategic approach to learning and teaching is set out in the Medium Term Strategy and articulated in the Appendix to the Annual Plan through a sub-set of the strategic objectives. There is a new appointment of a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) to provide senior leadership in this area. The Student Experience Committee has governance responsibility for learning and teaching and dissemination of good practice. The University has recently introduced a college structure with the intention of strengthening academic governance and ensuring consistency of practice across the University. There are four colleges, each headed by an Executive Dean; the Deans act as conduits for upward and downward communications and have a role to improve the delivery and monitoring of enhancement in teaching and learning.

2.23 The course approval process ensures that learning outcomes are clearly articulated and learning outcomes are now being articulated for sub-degree exit awards. There is an extensive set of guidance in the Course Developer's Guide and its appendices. Course development teams are required to include a variety of teaching and learning methods. Academic skills are embedded in the curriculum across all programmes and included in course approval criteria. Course approval also takes account of equality and diversity issues which demonstrates the University's inclusive approach to learning and teaching. The University also offers opportunities for students to become involved in research through research internships, participation in the Undergraduate Research Society and the journal *Diffusion*.

2.24 One of the University's strategic aims is to become an international University. The University aims to integrate an international culture into the University and is committed to providing opportunities for staff and student exchanges. A student travel bursary scheme provides funding for students to undertake work placements or study periods overseas.

2.25 The University has operated peer support through the observation of teaching scheme for many years. A separate management-led Teaching Observation and Review Scheme was introduced in 2012-13. Both schemes have recently been reviewed. The peer scheme will continue and the monitoring process will be standardised. The management-led scheme will change its name to Curriculum and Course Team review and Observation Scheme to better reflect its aims. The new scheme intends to complement the annual monitoring process by taking a more holistic approach to staff and curriculum development and also to act as a vehicle for enhancement.

2.26 The University has clear processes for the appointment, induction, appraisal and development of staff which supports excellence in teaching. New staff take the CertHe: Teaching Toolkit and all staff involved in teaching are required to gain D2 of the Professional Standards Framework within two years of appointment.

2.27 Monitoring of the effectiveness of the University's strategic approach to learning and teaching comes from student surveys, internal and external and the UCLan Student Panel.

A new strategy is being considered for student feedback to make it more systematic and encourage higher levels of student participation.

2.28 There has been a significant investment in resources and in the provision and refurbishment of learning spaces in the past four years. There is a minimum standard for teaching rooms and information technology services are being developed to allow universal access in time, place and device. In 2011-12 the University commenced a project to deliver an excellent online learning experience for students. This project, known as Digital Shift, sets minimum standards for the provision of a range of course and module information on the VLE including curriculum content, external examiners' reports and minutes of Staff/Student Liaison Committees. The project has now expanded to become Digital UCLan embracing the electronic management of assessment, mobile study, online communication and the further development of the digital literacy of staff and students. Remote access allows students to participate in classroom activity if they are unable to attend the campus. Students and staff at partner institutions and at the UCLan (Cyprus) campus also have access to the same material on the VLE.

2.29 The policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation B3 to be met in theory.

2.30 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with the senior management team, academic staff, professional services staff and students from the University and its partners. The review team read evidence provided by the University which included strategic statements, committee minutes, policy documents, programme information, and viewed online resources.

2.31 At the time of the review the University was in the process of reviewing the Medium Term Strategy to develop a new strategy and related sub-strategies for 2015-20. The first stage of this process has been a wide consultation process involving staff and students. Working groups, which include student representatives, are being set up to develop the sub-strategies, the subsequent implementation of which will be through the college structure. Although it is too early in the process for the review team to see any detailed documentation, the review team considers that the University's strategic approach to learning and teaching is well designed and incorporates effective consideration of learning resources and staff development.

2.32 Programme specifications show a good range of teaching and learning methods and contain a curriculum skills map which show where individual programme learning outcomes are being assessed. Student handbooks contain a section on approaches to teaching and learning which explains the methods that will be used and the skills students can expect to gain. Students have a good understanding of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The University has taken deliberate steps to embed themes such as employability, enterprise, internationalisation and sustainability within the curriculum which is well understood by staff. This leads to the good practice as set out on Expectation B4.

2.33 The review team heard how students have a range of opportunities to gain an international experience. In addition to internationalisation within the curriculum, this is achieved through the increasingly multicultural student body and increasing opportunities for overseas visits and exchanges supported by the travel bursary scheme. Students from international partners also have the opportunity to visit the Preston campus. The most recent figures show that there were over 1,000 trips by UCLan students in 2013-14. The provision of the travel bursary scheme is a strategic response to the University's aims for enhancement of the curriculum and the student experience. The availability of international study opportunities for all students is **good practice**.

2.34 Staff are well prepared for their teaching role. The Teaching Toolkit is well known and used by staff and has also been taken up by staff at UCLan (Cyprus) and at partner institutions. The use of the document management platform for accessing all programme and quality assurance material is of benefit to staff. Staff have yet to understand the purpose and benefits of the new Curriculum and Course Team review and the Observation Scheme.

2.35 The student submission is very complimentary about learning resources and this is echoed by the students the review team met. The submission raises a concern about hidden teaching costs and the review team heard that as part of the University's active response to the recommendations of the submission, these costs had now been abolished.

2.36 The Digital Shift project has been well managed to ensure a comprehensive roll-out to staff and students. There has been an increase in usage year on year following the setting of the minimum standards for content provision. This has been assisted by training and support, the identification of champions in each school and by a process of content auditing. There is ongoing training provided which is targeted at different levels of competencies. The effectiveness of the roll-out and the levels of staff engagement with it are checked in the annual monitoring process and through staff appraisal. Students at all UCLan campuses and at partner institutions are very satisfied with the digital resources provided by the University. Students are also aware of the contribution that digital initiatives can make to support widening participation and equality and diversity initiatives. The implementation of the Digital Shift project that enhances the student learning experience is **good practice**.

2.37 The University policies and procedures allow Expectation B3 to be met. The associated level of risk is low because the policies and procedures are well designed and operate effectively in practice.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.38 The University's strategic and operational approach to enabling student development and achievement is expressed in the Medium Term Strategy and the Appendix to the Annual Plan which set out objectives for improving the student experience and for employability. Oversight of these two areas rests with the Student Experience Committee on behalf of Academic Board.

2.39 The strategic approach encompasses efforts to improve progression rates facilitated by improved availability of student performance data via Tableau; student attendance monitoring through the Student First programme to improve retention; seeking an understanding of why some students fail to achieve their potential and interventions to address this; and developing an integrated approach to student support and wellbeing through the further development of the Student Support and Wellbeing Service.

2.40 The University is committed to widening participation which is reflected in its mission. One way this is achieved is through its collaborations with partner institutions and another is by an increased provision of digital information to allow students flexibility of access. There is a range of activity to support equality and diversity under the provisions of the Equality and Diversity Policy. Data is reported under the various protected characteristics and data derived from equality monitoring and equality impact assessments is used to identify positive changes that can be made to University policies.

2.41 Student transition to University is well supported. Flying Start assists in this by providing peer assisted learning support which commences before students start at the University. There is an online library, information technology induction and further support for academic and study skills via WISER during Welcome Week and the first semester. Induction was revised in 2014 to provide a more cohesive approach and 98 per cent of students rated it very good or good. Similar support is provided for returning students through the Welcome Back student portal pages. There is a student summer support guide which provides information on ongoing support services that students can access over the summer period and helps students preparing for resit examinations.

2.42 Students have the same Personal Tutor throughout their course and Personal Tutors are provided with an extensive guide to help with the role. The guide has recently been revised with assistance from the Students' Union. University policy is that students have three meetings with their personal tutor in the first year to facilitate transition into the University and then two meetings a year thereafter; the requirement is the same for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. Individual schools can offer more than the minimum requirement if they wish.

2.43 Employability is integrated into curriculum content and delivery and has to be demonstrated at course approval. Programme specifications identify skills relevant to employability and personal development where these are assessed within modules. Students are informed in their handbook as to how the course will enhance their employability as part of Personal Development Planning and the handbook also provides a section on 'Preparing for your career'. In addition co-curricular activities such as volunteering, enterprise, research and innovation and international experience are available for students to enhance their employability skills.

2.44 The policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation B4 to be met in theory.

2.45 The review team tested the expectation through meetings with the senior management team, academic staff, professional services staff and students from the University and its partners. The review team read evidence provided by the University which included strategic statements, committee minutes, policy documents, programme information, and viewed online resources.

2.46 A key component of the University's strategic approach to enabling student development and achievement is the embedding of employability into curriculum content and delivery. In addition the University recognises the educational benefits of preparing its students to become global citizens. The University has a commitment to its local region and the provision of educational opportunities for those from non-traditional backgrounds. The University's provision and the learning resources that support its delivery underpin the achievement of these aims and, as such, the review team considers the embedded approach to widening participation, employability and internationalisation is **good practice**.

2.47 In general, students are satisfied with their transition into the University and they have a good understanding of their course of study and how they will be assessed.

2.48 The review team heard from students that there is inconsistency in the application of the personal tutor system. Students in small cohorts are happy with the level of personal support received, which may or may not be from a personal tutor, but there is variance for larger cohorts with some students reporting not ever having met their personal tutor. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the University should ensure the consistent implementation of the revised policy on personal tutoring.

2.49 The most recent DHLE figures show that 92.2 per cent of full-time first degree students were in employment or further study six months after graduation, but the proportion of these in graduate level employment or further study and training was only 59.3 per cent. The University is actively seeking ways to improve graduate employability. This includes expanding opportunities for volunteering which has increased from 500 to 1,300, embedding work experience within courses, providing institutional and school level skills support. All graduates in non-graduate jobs are offered a paid internship and the opportunity to take a free postgraduate leadership course. The University has recently received Higher Education Academy funding for a project that will enhance the current embedding of employability within the curriculum.

2.50 The Careers Service has been reviewed and refocused to provide a more systematic and professional service to students; initial feedback from students is good. The Service aims to work with students from the beginning of their course to provide advice on career development. Students are very complimentary about the activities the University provides to help employability and are aware of opportunities such as internships and international study.

2.51 The review team concludes that Expectation B4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the policies and procedures are well designed and operate effectively in practice.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.52 A Student Charter sets out the two-way commitment between staff and students. This is reviewed annually by the Student Experience Committee in conjunction with the Students' Union (SU). The charter commits the University to providing opportunities for students 'to feed back on and influence their experience'. The SU commits to representing and engaging students in decision making. Achievements in this area are recorded using the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

2.53 Sabbatical officers and senior SU staff meet regularly with the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the University's Directorate. Elected student officers are also included on University level decision-making committees such as the Academic Board and Student Experience Committee. Sabbatical officers are also invited to course approval and review events.

2.54 Student representation is currently focused at school level, through Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings (SSLCs) held once per semester. SSLCs were most recently reviewed in the academic year 2012-13. The 2009 QAA Institutional Audit identified the need for students to be represented at faculty level. The University has recently introduced a college structure with a system of committees that replicate University level committees each including student representatives. These new structures should ensure a better flow of information between different levels of the University.

2.55 Course representatives are coordinated by the SU. The SU runs a 'Course Representative Academy' to support the development of appropriate skills. This includes providing additional training, for example, in organising an annual course representative conference. Student representatives are also inducted into the purpose of the committees on which they sit, including the role of committee members and the committee structure.

2.56 School Presidents are senior student representatives elected to work with the senior management for each school. Their role is wide ranging, including meeting with Deans of School on a monthly basis and liaising between staff and students.

2.57 Data from a wide range of surveys, including the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Student Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey and the International Student Barometer is used to inform annual monitoring and periodic review. This information is made available through a management information system. Student representatives are able to engage in discussions about the results of these surveys through the different committees. External examiner reports are specifically made available at SSLCs and to student representatives through learning management software.

2.58 Feedback from students through SSLCs, module evaluation and other informal methods are also included in annual monitoring processes. The Periodic Review of courses is used as a further opportunity for students to provide feedback on their course. However, the University has ended a formal requirement for end-of-module evaluation in light of poor completion rates, though it was noted that UCLan (Cyprus) continues to achieve high response rates.

2.59 Students are able to participate in 'Student Panels', an online research method used to provide insight into particular aspects of the University experience. The SU provides additional feedback to schools through a 'question of the month' format.

2.60 The policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation B5 to be met in theory.

2.61 The review team tested the nature of student engagement by examining evidence of the different mechanisms in place. This was followed up by meetings with both staff and students to clarify the extent to which these mechanisms are widespread and operating effectively.

2.62 Students find it difficult to identify where changes have been made in response to their views. This was exemplified by the inconsistent use of 'You Said, We Did' which is intended to feedback to students actions taken. Additionally students do not have the opportunity to contribute directly to the annual monitoring of courses. However, the University is recognised as increasingly receptive to student feedback, exemplified by student involvement in the University's Estates Strategy.

2.63 The application of written module evaluation is currently inconsistent and its purpose to students unclear. Some modules use end-point evaluations while others use mid-point evaluations, entitled 'Stop, Start, Continue'. However, staff are responsive to feedback, including that elicited more informally, for example through lectures. The future use of module evaluation will be addressed through the ongoing Student Voice review.

2.64 The system of course representatives is generally effective although there are some instances of inconsistent support for course representatives and the selection, rather than election, of student representatives. A review under the heading of 'Student Voice' has been initiated in conjunction with the SU. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to review the Student Voice.

2.65 The new college structure is not yet fully embedded and has the potential to improve the extent to which student engagement, for example through SSLCs, is systematic in nature. The role of School President is well regarded by staff and students that the team met with and students undertaking the role recognised its contribution to their employability.

2.66 Feedback from the 'Question of the Month' includes both qualitative and quantitative responses from a range of courses, giving a high quality snapshot of student views on particular questions. Examples were provided of how two different schools responded to resulting recommendations put forward by the SU. However, students reported that the data is not always felt to be positively received by the University.

2.67 The review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University fosters an environment that is welcoming of student feedback and is embedding mechanisms to ensure that this is systematic in nature.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning**

**Findings**

2.68 The AQA Manual sets out the policies and regulations for assessment. The recently reviewed Assessment Handbook sets out the assessment procedures. The Programme Specification and Module Descriptor articulates the assessment strategy for each course, with a curriculum skills map showing how course and module learning outcomes interrelate. The appendix to the module descriptor sets out the assessment strategy, outlining the assessments to be completed. In principle, the same assessments are used for a module delivered on the main campus and elsewhere, but it is possible for the assessment to be varied to meet local needs, as long as this is agreed on approval.

2.69 School manuals set out the process for managing assessment in each school. A module delivery guide covers matters such as forms of assessment, guidelines on marking and feedback and grading. Assessments are designed by staff and training is available, for example, in relation to devising marking criteria and learning outcomes. The external examiner approves all examinations. There is some negotiation in relation to what is appropriate in relation to other forms of assessment. All assessment takes place in English.

2.70 There is a University Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Scheme. There is a guide for staff and the application of the scheme in relation to admissions is overseen centrally, including admissions to partners where relevant. Information on APL is available on the website and there are routes for potential applicants to raise queries. Information in relation to APL for individual students is made available to the relevant Assessment Board.

2.71 Learning outcomes are available to students in Student Handbooks. These also include information about assessment, for example, extenuating circumstances and feedback. Module descriptors, including learning outcomes, are also available to students on the VLE. Details of assessments including criteria and tasks for each module are in a Module Information Pack (MIP). There is a module verification form to confirm that each MIP has appropriate coverage.

2.72 In relation to the marking of assessed work, second marking and moderation are covered by the School Manual. Students get specific and generic feedback, with at least generic feedback normally within 15 working days.

2.73 Extenuating circumstances are covered by the Assessment Handbook and the School Manual. These are dealt with by College panels to improve consistency.

2.74 The schools run the module and course Assessment Boards. The Chairs of Assessment Boards are approved and trained. Data is provided from electronic student records, and meetings are supported by trained administrators.

2.75 The same assessment process applies to partner institutions. Students take the same assessments, save for where some variation has been agreed on approval, in which case the module leader in the University and the external examiner should see the assessment brief and criteria. The relevant school deals with moderation, with processes

varying for franchised and validated provision and runs module and assessment boards to include partners, though a partner may hold and chair the board in the case of validation, with school attendance. The same external examiner normally covers a course at the main campus and any partner.

2.76 The University maintains oversight of assessment through an annual oversight of external examiner reports which goes to ASQAC, and through annual monitoring, which includes coverage of points raised by external examiners and statistics on student achievement. Interim review may also cover any relevant assessment matters. Periodic course review also considers points relating to assessment from external examiner reports or annual monitoring, and considers student achievement data.

2.77 The Academic Audit Sub-Committee has reviewed aspects of assessment procedure. University audits have included moderation feedback and assessment criteria, Assessment Board minuting, extensions and marking criteria.

2.78 The regulations, policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation B6 to be met in theory.

2.79 The review team considered documents relevant to assessment and external examiner reports. The review team spoke to staff and to students with regard to assessment.

2.80 The review team saw a wide range of programme specifications and module descriptors that included appropriate learning outcomes. All module descriptors also included information relating to assessment, though there was some variation in the level of detail. Students Handbooks and MIPs also included relevant detail.

2.81 Assessment Board minutes and examples of data made available for assessment boards demonstrated an appropriate approach. Staff the review team met were clear about the importance of School Manuals and the Assessment Handbook. They are also clear about the process in relation to APL.

2.82 External examiner reports seen by the review team are generally positive about the assessment process, for example on the variety of assessment and on moderation. However, some points raised for further consideration include moderation and distribution of marks. The University accepts that work is ongoing in relation to consistency of feedback and reference to learning outcomes, and reluctance to use the full range of marks.

2.83 Students with whom the review team met are content with their experience as regards assessment. Learning outcomes and assessment tasks are clear. Feedback has improved and is normally received within 15 working days, but students reported that the meaning of feedback could be better defined and consistency monitored. There are concerns that the quality of feedback is variable and it is not always clear what is expected nor did it always give guidance on how to improve, or relate clearly to criteria. Students are positive about feedback given online, including recorded oral feedback. Information on extenuating circumstances in handbooks is not always up to date and consistent. Minutes from Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings seen by the review team also raise some points about assessment, but at a relatively low level, for example relating to the length of an exam, or some variation in marking. There are some concerns about the assessment of group work, about how far assessment criteria are explained to students so that they fully understand them and about whether feedback commitments are always sufficiently met so that feedback can be understood by students.

2.84 The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met. The associated level of risk is low because appropriate regulations, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

## **Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.85 The Academic Regulations and the AQA Manual Appendix 5 set out the requirements in relation to external examiners. An external examiner is appointed for each programme with the same examiner covering the programme wherever it is delivered. The criteria and process for nominating and appointing external examiners is set out in a detailed guide. Each college ASQAC keeps an oversight of the timeliness of external examiner appointment and reports, working with central quality staff.

2.86 On appointment, each external examiner is provided with information setting out their duties and briefing sessions are provided. This information includes programme and module specifications and the University is moving to making such information available through the virtual learning environment. It is a duty of the external examiner to approve assessments and to attend the Assessment Board and endorse results. There is no duty to visit staff and students or to comment on student learning experience although this does happen for some UK partners and for China. External examiner input is sought in relation to articulation agreements.

2.87 Each external examiner produces an annual report by completing a detailed form, and also a sufficient evidence form to show that relevant material has been received to complete their role. When their term ends, each external examiner produces an overall progress report. All reports are submitted by mid-August or within six weeks of the final assessment board.

2.88 The external examiner is specifically asked to comment on academic standards, including comparability to similar courses in UK, the academic standards set by the institution, Subject Benchmarks Statements, FHEQ, and arrangements for extenuating circumstances. Comment is also invited on the strengths and weaknesses of the student cohort, the standard of feedback, whether the learning experience prepares the students for the world of work, the assessment process, the effectiveness of assessment in measuring learning outcomes, and moderation.

2.89 An external examiner can make 'essential', 'advisable' or 'desirable' recommendations. Essential recommendations are ones which potentially place academic quality or standards at risk and require an immediate response from the Dean of School and are tracked by the Academic Quality and Awards Office. Advisable and desirable recommendations are picked up through the annual monitoring process. The Dean of School has ultimate responsibility for a written response being provided. An external examiner can raise a serious concern with the Chair of the Assessment Board, or the Vice-Chancellor. Overall oversight of external examiner reports and of ensuring that points made are followed up lies with ASQAC.

2.90 The Course Handbook includes reference to the role of the external examiner sometimes providing their name. External examiner reports are made available to students on the VLE.

2.91 External examiner reports for postgraduate research students are dealt with by the Research Student Registry.

2.92 The policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation B7 to be met in theory.

2.93 The review team read a range of relevant policies, reports and committee papers and minutes. The review team spoke to staff and to students.

2.94 The process in place for dealing with external examiners is reasonably clear and detailed. In particular, the form for external examiner reports is well developed. The Academic Quality and Awards office and college ASQACs check that appropriate external examiners are in place. Staff confirmed that the vast majority of reports are received between final assessments in June and annual monitoring in October, being considered by course leaders and responded to by the School Dean. It is anticipated that the new college structure will aid consistency in dealing with reports in a timely way. Reports are made available to course staff electronically.

2.95 The review team saw a range of external examiner reports which were clear and informative and reasonably detailed, showing serious consideration of relevant matters. The reports are largely positive, in particular, for academic standards but some issues were raised such as an uneven distribution of assessment across the year, or the format of questions.

2.96 External examiners are asked to identify where a comment relates specifically to provision at one provider but they do not always do so. This may lead to some issues not being identified sufficiently clearly. Staff at partner colleges see the external examiner reports and may be involved in responding to them.

2.97 The annual external examiner's Summary Report received by ASQAC is thorough and detailed with statistical summaries and coverage of issues in each school. These show good practice, for example, innovative assessment, student support and embedding employability. They also show issues to be followed up, for example, where reports are received or responded to late and issues relating to feedback, moderation and verification of assessments. The University accepts that there have been problems with communication and late information and the increased use of information technology to support assessment and external examiners should help to address this.

2.98 The review team saw evidence of external examiners' comments being identified and followed up through responses from Deans of School and in the annual monitoring process, including collaborative provision

2.99 Although external examiner reports are available to students on the VLE, some students indicated that they were not aware of the reports or had read them. Some students were not clear about the role of external examiners. There was limited evidence of issues arising from external examiner reports being discussed in SSLCs.

2.100 The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met. The associated level of risk is low because appropriate policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.101 All taught courses and research degree courses are reviewed each year as part of the University's annual monitoring process. Arrangements for the operation of the monitoring and review processes for taught courses are managed through the Academic Quality and Awards office.

2.102 Course leaders for taught programmes complete a standard annual monitoring template (with a variant for collaborative provision) which requires comment on progress in achieving the previous action plan. In developing a new action plan the report requires an analysis of student data, external examiners' comments, student feedback, and a response to any recommendations from recent approval and reapproval events.

2.103 The course reports are used by the Deans of School to inform a school report and action plan. These reports are considered at the relevant college ASQAC meeting to confirm actions plans, discuss areas relevant to the college's remit and refer institutional matters, including areas of good practice, to the special meeting of the University ASQAC.

2.104 A separate report template has been introduced for the UCLan (Cyprus) and Burnley campuses to enable specific issues relating to operation of courses at these sites to be highlighted separately within the annual monitoring process schools and the International Office are responsible within the annual monitoring process for reviewing the marketing and promotional materials of relevant partners.

2.105 The Dean of School and RDT produce reports on the operation of research degree courses operating within the School.

2.106 At institutional level, a meeting of the Associate Deans/Quality Leads is conducted prior to a special ASQAC meeting to review the school reports, sample the course level reports, and confirm the appropriateness of action plans. The meeting also confirms the issues to be raised at an institutional level for consideration at the special ASQAC meeting, and elicits feedback on the operation of the process, including items of good practice. A University-level report is considered at the special meeting of ASQAC. Overview reports are also produced separately for UK partnership provision and international partnership provision for consideration by CSC and ASQAC.

2.107 Periodic Course Review (PCR) is conducted by review panels on behalf of ASQAC. The AQA Manual sets out the requirements and responsibilities of those involved in this process. The process essentially replicates that of course approval with the added requirements that a critical appraisal of the course to date and the consideration of student feedback is undertaken.

2.108 For courses that have ceased to recruit new students the Course Leader is required to produce an annual monitoring report while existing students remain actively enrolled upon the course. For partner institutions, a termination action plan is produced by the International Office or by the Academic Quality and Awards Office for UK provision, following a standard template when a partnership is being terminated.



2.109 The policies and procedures of the University allow expectation B8 to be met in theory.

2.110 The review team scrutinised the University's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, annual monitoring reports produced at different levels, documentation relating to periodic review, and minutes of meetings. The review team also examined the action plans developed for programmes that were being run out, and met staff and students.

2.111 The evidence considered by the review team confirms that, in general, the monitoring and review processes for taught courses are rigorously and consistently applied to maintain standards and enhance learning opportunities. It makes effective use of external reference points and draws on expertise from those outside the course in the course monitoring and review process.

2.112 Feedback from students informs the annual monitoring process and the annual monitoring reports are considered at a college ASQAC meeting where there is student representation from each of the relevant schools. However, some students with whom the review team met were unclear about the annual monitoring process. Similarly, while annual monitoring reports are considered at college level, they are not systematically considered at the course level Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings. As a result there is no clear and consistent process by which students at programme level are systematically involved in the annual monitoring process. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the University systematically involve students in the annual monitoring and review of courses.

2.113 Evidence reviewed by the review team confirm that the University operates effective processes to protect the academic interests of students when a programme is being closed.

2.114 The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of courses.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints***

**Findings**

2.115 The University's three-stage complaints procedure is outlined on the University's website, in student handbooks and is described in detail (including providing relevant complaints forms and links to further support) in a document accessible from the website. Procedures for complaints to the University's partners are also covered, including a stage three appeal where complaints, which have not been resolved through partners' local procedures at stage one or two, are considered.

2.116 For students who wish to appeal against an assessment decision or an academic penalty, the University's academic regulations, website and handbooks outline the academic appeals process, clarify grounds for making an appeal, provide links to documents which detail the two-stage appeals process and provide first and second stage appeals application forms. In all cases, University complaints and appeals processes provide for referral to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) in the event that the complaint or appeal is unresolved after the final stage of the University's processes.

2.117 The annual letter from the OIA, to the University for 2013 summarising statistics of cases that it has processed during the year, shows that one in three students who exhausted University complaints procedures during 2013 brought their complaint to OIA, and that, of the 19 University complaints dealt with by OIA in 2013, 11 were upheld or partially upheld.

2.118 The University attempts to resolve complaints informally and a written record of the outcome is normally sent to the student. Formal stages of the complaints and appeals processes have expected timeframes for completion and annual reports are considered by Student Experience Committee and shared with the SU, including positive actions taken in response to student complaints. The student submission confirmed that information about complaints and appeals was readily available from the website, in handbooks and from staff, but students considered that more could be done to highlight the importance and value of the initial informal complaints process and suggested that the University was not always meeting its own timescales for formal stages of the complaints and appeals processes.

2.119 An Equality Impact Assessment of the Complaints procedure was carried out in 2012, but did not identify any adverse impacts in terms of equality target groups.

2.120 The University's Academic Appeals and Students Complaints policies allow Expectation B9 to be met in theory.

2.121 The review team tested the operation and effectiveness of the complaints and appeals procedures by talking to students and staff, reviewing the University's and OIA's annual reports on complaints and appeals at UCLan, and examining the information made available to students regarding appeals and complaints through the University website, VLE and handbooks.

2.122 Students with whom the review team met were generally aware that information on how to make a complaint or appeal was available on the University website or in their course handbooks, but had not had reason to use these processes themselves. They felt that

school Student Presidents have an increasing role in supporting students in the first informal stage of complaints or appeals against marks awarded.

2.123 The annual reports on appeals and complaints submitted to the Student Experience Committee provide summary statistics by school or service (enabling any 'hotspots' to be identified), gender, ethnicity, and other student attributes, but do not include any record or analysis of whether processes are completed within the times specified in the University's policies. The review and annual summaries of the response times for different levels of complaints and appeals are not currently included in annual reports to the Student Experience Committee. Students reported their concerns that the timescales for response cited in the policies are not always being met. This annual summary also includes the enhancements that the University is making to its complaints and appeals processes (in consultation with the SU) including introducing the option of mediation into the complaints procedure using the Mediation Clinic in the Lancashire Law School, providing additional training for frontline staff through Human Resources, and reviewing the time allocated to stage two and three complaints.

2.124 The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met. The associated level of risk is low because suitable appeals and complaints policies are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others**

**Findings**

2.125 The University does not have a discrete strategy relating to the delivery of learning opportunities with others, although its approach is strategically driven and aligns with its mission and medium term strategy. In accordance with its widening participation agenda to extend educational opportunity, it works with a network of partners in the north-west of England. It also has an extensive range of 125 international partners and has been engaged in overseas activity for over 20 years.

2.126 The strategic approach to the delivery of learning opportunities with others has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of its UK partners over the last two years, from 41 to 29, enabling it to focus on strategically more important partners. It has also developed closer relationships with two local colleges. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) oversees international strategic developments, advised by the International Strategy Group. Together these support the development and implementation of the University's international strategy and ensure a consistent institutional approach. Through the development of strategic partnerships, the University may develop a number of overseas branch campuses.

2.127 The University's variety of learning opportunities with others are clear, including franchised courses, dual degrees, articulation agreements, credit recognition, joint supervision of research degrees and pre-undergraduate and pre-master's foundation courses. It has no joint awards. The University publishes a register of its collaborative activity including, for each partner, details of the franchised or validated courses they deliver, their status and approval period. Information relating to placement activity is held by schools and Erasmus study abroad arrangements are recorded by the International Office. The University takes responsibility for the academic standards and quality of all awards made in its name, through its partner and course approval, monitoring, review and assessment processes. The responsibilities of the University and its partners are set out in comprehensive and, binding legal agreements which are checked by its legal advisers and scrutinised in approval and periodic review processes.

2.128 Governance arrangements for academic partnerships follow a clear route. The University's CPC, which reports to Academic Board, has oversight of the academic portfolio including international and UK partnerships. Proposals for new collaborative provision are developed at school level. The business case uses a standard template and is approved by the relevant Dean of School. CPC approves the business case for, and outline approval of, new collaborative provision, save in the case of UK further education colleges operating under the University's standard Memoranda of Co-operation, which exempts them from such a requirement. The University's CSC on behalf of the ASQAC has oversight of procedural matters related to the approval of new partners and the management of collaborative provision. Appropriate financial and academic due diligence is undertaken in order to safeguard standards and the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities. CSC approves new UK and overseas partnerships, approvals being ratified by ASQAC where level 7 and 8 provision is involved.

2.129 Following approval of the business case and partnership, a formal course approval event is held, conducted by CAP. Normally the approval event is held at the partner organisation. However, in exceptional circumstances this may take place at the University or by video conference, with written evidence being provided relating to the learning resources available to support the delivery. Responsibility for the effective management of collaborative activity rests with schools. Overall procedures for the development, approval, review and termination of all collaborative provision are set out in clear University guidance. Key functions for each course delivered in partnership (including placement activity) are identified to ensure a consistent approach.

2.130 Placement activity on University courses is approved by the Deans of Schools. The University provides comprehensive guidance on structured work experience for staff and University resources are available for students and course developers. The University's International Office is responsible for the management of exchange arrangements and ERASMUS programmes. Schools manage the relationships with professional bodies while a central log of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies arrangements is maintained by the Academic Quality and Awards office. The requirements of professional bodies are considered during course approval, review and accreditation processes.

2.131 Partner organisations have responsibility for recruitment to collaborative courses, which are identified under their own UCAS listing or through that of the University. There is close liaison between partners and the institution's admissions team. In order to ensure effective oversight of marketing publicity materials, the University provides comprehensive guidance to its partner organisations. The International Office and the partnership team check institutional level materials and schools are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of information for students. The University produces all certificates and transcripts and maintains a central record of students studying with its partners.

2.132 The University's policies and regulations relating to the management of higher education provision with others enables Expectation B10 to be met in theory.

2.133 The review team was able to assess the operation and effectiveness of the Institution's policies and procedures governing the management of its provision with others through meetings with staff, partners involved in supporting the delivery of learning opportunities, and students. The review team considered a range of evidence provided by the University relating to approval, review and management, committee minutes, as well as legal and other documentation.

2.134 The review team found that the University's strategic approach to the delivery of learning opportunities with others has underpinned the reconfiguration of its UK and international partnerships and the development and planned development of overseas branch campuses. It ensures also that appropriate levels of resources, including staff, are committed to its collaborative activities in order to sustain effective oversight. The work of the International Strategy Group and the International Office ensures a strategic fit of current and planned partnerships and supports the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International). The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) meets annually with key UK partners to determine the strategic direction of partnership activity. The review of international partnerships by the International Office in 2013 to assess their strategic fit led to the termination of a number of courses and partnerships. The review team was able to confirm from meetings and by viewing sample documentation relating to the withdrawal process that appropriate exit arrangements are implemented in order to safeguard the interests of students studying with partner organisations.

2.135 Approval of collaborative partnerships is a risk-based approach. Documentation seen by the review team relating to partnership development, approval and review indicated

that processes were being conducted in accordance with the University's approved procedures. Appropriate due diligence addressing academic, financial, legal and other matters is undertaken as part of any outline proposals for a new collaboration. Proposals are considered by CPC and CSC and a sub-panel of CSC usually visits prospective partners to assess learning resources and quality assurance processes in order to gain institutional approval for the collaboration. As part of the approval process, the University approves all staff teaching on its courses and on those which it validates. Changes to staffing are also approved.

2.136 Following institutional approval of the partnership, the approval of modules and courses to be delivered is analogous to that of on-campus provision, save that the approval event is normally held at the partner organisation. The AQA manual details general responsibilities of the partner, school and University. The review team was able to confirm through meetings with staff and scrutiny of documentary evidence that procedures are followed.

2.137 Partners follow the approved assessment requirements for modules and courses to ensure the maintenance of academic standards, but with some scope for local contextualisation which the University approves. Schools liaise with partners relating to assessment issues and arrange external moderation as required.

2.138 Assessment boards for collaborative arrangements operate in accordance with standard arrangements for on-campus provision. Chairs are provided by the University, save in the case of validated courses when responsibility may be delegated to a partner organisation, subject to the University approving and training the Chair. University staff are members of such delegated assessment boards to maintain parity of standards. All awards are dealt with in accordance with the University's Academic regulations.

2.139 External examiners are appointed by the University and normally cover campus-based and partner students studying the same course. Where courses operate at more than one delivery site, a team of external examiners is appointed to ensure parity of standards. The University facilitates but does not require external examiners to visit partner institutions and meet students. External examiners are asked to specifically identify comments relating to collaborative provision, rather than on individual providers. Staff at partner organisations confirmed that they see and are involved in the formulation of responses to external examiners' reports and follow up actions. The review team found that external examining was effective in assuring standards and enhancing quality in relation to collaborative courses. External examiners are required to approve articulation mappings.

2.140 The monitoring and review of courses and modules delivered with partners broadly follow standard University processes. The International Office's Partnerships Team produces annual monitoring overview reports for UK and international collaborative provision which are considered at a special meeting of the ASQAC. In accordance with University policy, three visits are made to a partner in the first year of operation of a new partnership with two visits per year required thereafter. Written reports of such visits are required using a standard template and enable the support, development and enhancement of partnership provision. A low rate of compliance in submitting such reports has been addressed by the institution and report submission rates have improved markedly.

2.141 The University has well developed mechanisms to support its partners. These include regular meetings of senior staff at the University with partner organisations in the UK and overseas; active engagement of the International Office, Academic Quality and Awards office, and the Partnership Team; the proactive role of the link tutor in providing support and mentoring for staff and students in partner organisations in the UK and overseas; the provision of proactive support for local partners when undergoing quality reviews and

professional body engagements; a full range of staff development opportunities for staff at its partner organisations, including access to continuing professional development opportunities; reduced fees for studying for higher degrees and other forms of training; full access to the VLE; opportunities for staff in overseas operations to visit the UK and engage in shadowing opportunities; network development events; regular meetings of the partnership forum which provide opportunities for updating, the sharing of best practice and discussion of new developments. The review team identifies as **good practice** the effective role of the University in supporting its partners.

2.142 The annual monitoring process requires Schools to check marketing materials of partner organisations. In spite of the clear guidance provided by the University, the summary of annual monitoring reports indicates that some international partners do not provide the marketing materials to course teams. No such issues are apparent for UK partners and the review team heard evidence of the active monitoring of accuracy of printed and electronic information. Students who met the review team were satisfied with the reliability and accuracy of the information they received during the admission process and throughout their studies.

2.143 The student transcript records the location of study and, from 2014-15, all certificates clearly indicate that certificates should be read in conjunction with the transcript.

2.144 The University made reference to the activities at its Cyprus branch campus in the section of its self-evaluation document dealing with the management of its higher education provision with others. Having scrutinised the available documentation and having heard the evidence in meetings with staff, the review team found that this did not fall within the ambit of section B10 of the Quality Code. Accordingly, it has dealt with provision in Cyprus under other relevant sections of this report.

2.145 The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is met. The associated level of risk is low because, through meetings with staff and students and scrutiny of the range of evidence provided, the University has in place effective policies, procedures and operational management to implement and secure effectively its academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities delivered with others.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.**

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees***

#### **Findings**

2.146 The Research and Innovation Committee (RIC) has delegated responsibility from Academic Board for research, innovation and oversight of research degrees. This latter function is carried out on the RIC's behalf by the Research Degrees Board. The newly established college RICs report to the University RIC and support the delivery of research and innovation at a college level in line with the University's strategies. Each school has an RDT who has an oversight of progression and completion rates and provides support for supervisors and students. Administrative support for research students is provided by the Research Student Registry (RSR).

2.147 There is a comprehensive range of documents that set out the quality assurance arrangements covering postgraduate research degrees including the AQA Manual, section L of the Academic Regulations, Research Code of Practice for the Supervision, Examination and Administration of Research Students, Student Handbook for Postgraduate Research, Research Supervision Handbook, Code of Conduct for Research, Guidance for Examiners of Research Degrees.

2.148 The Research Student Registry is responsible for processing all applications assisted by staff guidance notes. Before an offer of admission for a research degree place is made, the Dean/Head of School and RDTs are responsible for ensuring that the research environment in which the student will be studying is suitable. Students are allocated a supervisory team including a Director of Studies, at least one other supervisor and an independent Personal Tutor; duties are set out in the Research Code of Practice for the Supervision, Examination and Administration of Research Students. All staff new to supervision must undertake training before supervising students.

2.149 Student progress is monitored via the Annual Progression Monitoring process and the Research Degrees Board (RDB) monitors progression and completion rates within each School for report to RIC.

2.150 Students are given an individual training programme, including compulsory research skills training, which is detailed on the Research Programme Approval document and progress is recorded in Progress Files. The Research Student Handbook provides further information for students on the range of training available. Students who teach are required to take the one-day Introduction to Teaching session. There is an Annual Research Student Conference which provides opportunities for research students to disseminate their work.

2.151 There are formal and informal mechanisms for students to provide feedback on their experience which is detailed in the Research Student Handbook.

2.152 The Postgraduate Research Forum meets once a semester and allow students to voice views and concerns; there are two student representatives per school and one RDT or supervisor. Students have recently been included as representatives on the RIC and college RICs.



2.153 Oversight of research degrees assessment is provided by the RDB reporting to RIC and criteria and assessment processes are set out in the RSR's guide to Examination and Preparation of Theses for Research Students and in the AQA Manual, Academic Regulations and Code of practice and the regulations also include criteria for the appointment of examiners.

2.154 The appeals procedures are detailed in the Assessment Handbook and a small number of research student complaints and appeals have been handled through the University's standard procedures.

2.155 The policies and procedures of the University allow Expectation B11 to be met in theory.

2.156 The review team tested the expectation through meetings with the senior management team, academic staff, professional services staff and students from the University and its partners. The review team read evidence provided by the University which included strategic statements, committee minutes, policy documents, programme information and viewing online resources.

2.157 There are effective governance arrangements in place which allow oversight of postgraduate research degrees. From the evidence provided, the review team was able to see that the RDB is taking an active overview of student progress matters.

2.158 There has been a recent slow and steady growth in postgraduate research student numbers and it is the University's intention to grow numbers to around 1,000 from the current 670. The University is careful to ensure that additional students will not be taken on without the necessary supervisory capacity.

2.159 Postgraduate research students are satisfied with the information provided for them both before arrival and once they have commenced their programme. The process for approval of their research programme is clear and students are well integrated into the research environment through induction. Postgraduate research students studying at the UCLan (Cyprus) campus have a local supervisor and one from the Preston campus and are given the opportunity for visits to the Preston campus. In general students are satisfied with the facilities and resources provided for them particularly those available online. Students feel that there are opportunities for their voice to be heard, mainly in an informal way via their supervisor and RDT.

2.160 Supervision meetings are now required every fortnight and no less than once per month. There are three formal documented meetings a year which feed into the Annual Progression Monitoring process. Students are provided with an extensive progress file which allows them to record their individual achievements and the training attended throughout their study, gives them a personalised timeline and is a place to keep notes of supervisory and annual monitoring meetings. Oversight of individual student progress is also recorded in the progress file by the RDT.

2.161 In 2013, the policy on postgraduate research students who teach was developed to provide a framework. The policy has recently been revised and was approved by SEC in February 2015. Some students who met the review team are involved in teaching and, while they had not been through an application process, they had been interviewed. An application process is now a requirement of the updated policy. All those students who teach have taken the Teaching Toolkit to prepare them for the task, which they have found very helpful. Students feel supported in their teaching role but their experience of receiving feedback on their teaching was variable.

2.162 The review team concludes that Expectation B11 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the policies and procedures are well designed and operate effectively in practice.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.163 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.164 All applicable Expectations have been met and the risk is judged low in each case. Two recommendations are made covering two Expectations, one affirmation is made covering one Expectation and four features of good practice are made covering six Expectations.

2.165 The two recommendations arising from the Expectations indicate that the University should ensure the consistent implementation of the revised policy on Personal Tutoring and systematically involve students in the annual monitoring and review of courses. The affirmation confirms the steps being taken to review the student voice. The features of good practice confirm the implementation of the Digital Shift project that enhances the student learning experience, the availability of international study opportunities for all students, the embedded approach to widening participation, employability and internationalisation and the effective role of the University in supporting its partners.

2.166 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

3.1 Information for the public and prospective students is primarily published through the University's website. This includes information that describes the University's mission, values, strategy and annual plan, and corporate information under the 'About Us' webpages. UCLan (Cyprus) hosts its own website which provides information about the courses and awards on offer at the University's Cyprus campus. The University also publishes more detailed information including on academic quality and standards and various policy documents on managing University information.

3.2 The University's document management platform securely shares quality assurance documents. As well as providing a repository for the definitive versions of programme specifications and module descriptors, it also holds annual monitoring reports, interim and periodic reviews, material for collaborative partners, external examiners' reports, health and safety information and templates and forms. The intention is to provide a system that is easy for staff to populate and for users to navigate and provides secure communications while obviating the need to use post or email. The enhanced accessibility of quality assurance materials through the document management platform is **good practice**.

3.3 The University's marketing service provides guidance and oversight on all University information published in printed or online form and manages the University website. The University's Public Information Policy (PIP) defines whether public information is monitored centrally through the marketing service or locally authorised in the schools, with devolved authority for all publications except marketing (including prospectuses), the University website and online media, and communication with the press/media. However, the summary of Annual Monitoring Reports indicates that the schools experience difficulties in monitoring marketing materials for international partners and are uncertain of the requirements for checking marketing materials. Provision of detailed course information, including entry requirements, curriculum content, progression routes, financial information and the admissions process is an important aspect of the website for which the marketing service is responsible and is the most common way for prospective students to access course-related information. Programme specifications are available on the website for current and prospective students, together with KIS data from Unistats. It was clear to the review team that the University complies with the requirements relating to the Wider Information Set. Information about courses offered by collaborative partners is approved by the Director of Marketing with partners responsible for securing approval as defined in their Memorandum of Co-operation.

3.4 The University surveys applicants and new students to provide feedback to improve the application process and new students are invited to join school-based social media groups to establish contact with fellow course members.

3.5 Information for current students is provided in student handbooks, the University website, the Student Portal and VLE. Accuracy of information in handbooks is checked as part of interim and periodic reviews. A Cyprus-specific portal was launched in 2014 in response to students finding the Preston portal confusing. The University's Student Charter

defines its and the Student Union's commitments to students and their responsibilities to the University and community.

3.6 On completion of their course, the University provides all students with a degree certificate and a HEAR transcript which includes both their module outcomes and wider student achievements completed during their study period. The transcript includes information about where the student has studied and the degree certificate indicates that it should be read in conjunction with the HEAR transcript.

3.7 The University publishes separate tables listing all UK and international partners and, for each partner, the list of franchised or validated courses that they are approved to deliver and their status and approval period.

3.8 The University's PIP, online information, student handbooks and student and partner records allow Expectation C to be met in theory.

3.9 In order to test the operation and effectiveness of the information supplied by UCLan, the review team examined information for the public and prospective and current students such as the undergraduate and postgraduate Student Prospectuses, the University website and programme specifications, and discussed the information available with staff and students.

3.10 Students with whom the review team met are universally satisfied with the reliability and accuracy of the information they received as part of the enquiry application and admission process

3.11 Information for current students about their courses is provided through handbooks, the student portal, VLE and other websites, as well as the increasing use of social media to facilitate communication between students and the University. The student submission acknowledges significant recent improvements, and commends the University on its work in this area. This view was supported by students that the review team met. The University's expectations of students are set out through the Student Charter and via student handbooks. Students with whom the review team met are satisfied with this information.

3.12 When students leave their programme of study they are provided with a HEAR transcript and degree certificate. For UCLan (Cyprus) the degree certificate does not include a statement that it should be read in conjunction with the transcript. A presentation certificate is provided in addition to the degree certificate which states that the degree is awarded jointly by the University of Central Lancashire (Cyprus) and the University of Central Lancashire. A similar formulation of wording is included in the website of UCLAN (Cyprus). This is inconsistent with the status of UCLan (Cyprus) as a campus of UCLan and a single qualification from the University, although the degree transcript makes clear that the course is studied at UCLan (Cyprus).

3.13 In the review team's meetings with senior staff, the University acknowledged that the wording on the presentation certificate and the UCLan (Cyprus) website, stating that it is a joint award, is inaccurate and will review this wording. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2015, the University takes steps to ensure the accuracy of information regarding the status of qualifications delivered at UCLan (Cyprus).

3.14 The review team concludes that Expectation C is met. The associated level of risk is moderate because, although suitable policies and procedures are in place, the current wording of publicity and presentation certificates and the website for courses delivered at UCLan (Cyprus) is inaccurate.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

## The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.15 In reaching its judgment the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.16 The Expectation is met but the risk is moderate. There is one recommendation that the University ensures the accuracy of information regarding the status of qualifications delivered at UCLan (Cyprus). There is one feature of good practice which confirms the enhanced accessibility of quality assurance materials through the document management platform and the virtual learning environment site.

3.17 the review team concludes that the quality of the provider's information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

### Findings

4.1 The University describes its approach to enhancement as one where it 'expects and encourages enhancement in everything it does, and seeks to improve the student experience through all its activities'. The systematic nature of enhancement activities is managed through the University's committee structure and is overseen by the Academic Board. The University makes use of annual monitoring, targeted academic audits and Periodic Course Review processes to identify opportunities for enhancement. Proposals for academic audits are submitted and reviewed by the Academic Audit Sub-Committee.

4.2 The Medium Term Strategy highlights the embedding of enhancement of the student experience including, in the 2014-15 Annual Plan, the Student First Programme, improving undergraduate retention and enhancing employability. The monitoring of the implementation of the strategy is the way in which the University says that it ensures enhancement goals are met. A new five-year strategic plan is in draft form and this includes a range of sub-strategies which is intended to embed enhancement initiatives.

4.3 The Student First Programme is positioned as a response to the 2013 NSS and includes a range of strands focused on the student as a customer, including digitising routine processes, improving communication to new students and revitalising 'Welcome Week' activities. Similar procedures are expected to be applied to other routine processes such as assessment boards and retention and student success. The University is also looking at further supporting students in order to improve degree classifications.

4.4 The development of online learning, particularly in the form of a cultural shift in encouraging staff to use online resources under the banner Digital Shift has been supported through staff workshops and the use of case studies, with a particular emphasis on helping staff to become more digitally literate. The project is designed to support other initiatives such as the Student First project and an electronic portal for external examiners and includes electronic feedback methods such as Grademark.

4.5 The policies and procedures of the University allow the Expectation on Enhancement to be met in theory.

4.6 The review team tested the systematic nature of enhancement at the University by examining evidence of the different strategies, initiatives and structures in place. This was followed up by meetings with both staff and students to clarify the extent to which these are allowing the effective dissemination of good practice.

4.7 The implementation of University's Digital Shift project through the use of rolling 'Minimum Standards', supported by staff training and the auditing of practice, has been well received by students for the available digital facilities. This leads to the good practice as set out in Expectation B3.

4.8 The new college structure, yet to be fully embedded, will allow greater institutional oversight for the identification and dissemination of good practice. Executive Deans of the colleges act as two-way communication conduits between the schools within the college and the University.

4.9 There is evidence that the University is using a range of quality review processes to identify opportunities for enhancement. Initiatives such as 'Student First', the ongoing 'Student Voice' review and a rolling programme of academic audits indicate that the university is proactive in responding to these opportunities.

4.10 Strands from the Medium Term Strategy, including Employability are embedded in the course approval process.

4.11 The review team concludes that the Expectation on Enhancement is met. The associated level of risk is low because the University actively questions its practices and systematically undertakes initiatives to enhance them.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.12 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.13 The Expectation in this area is met.

4.14 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Introduction

5.1 A key intention of the Medium Term Strategy is that the University will enhance its reputation for graduate employability. Employability is embedded at the heart of its activities and considers it as part of the course approval process and course learning outcomes.

5.2 The percentage of students who have studied a full-time undergraduate course and are in either work or further study six months after graduation is slightly below the government benchmark and efforts are being made to increase this percentage. Early indications are that positive trends have been noted in improving graduate unemployment and in students obtaining graduate positions.

5.3 Opportunities for structured work experience are built into the University's programmes. Additionally many of the University's courses are professionally accredited. The University has attracted Higher Education Academy money to run a programme of academic staff development around the integration of employability into the curriculum. The strength of the University's links with industry is recognised by external examiners.

5.4 Employer links are used to provide projects, internships and work placements. This includes international placements made accessible through travel bursaries, including opportunities to study at the University's Cyprus campus. International employability is supported through the University's 'Worldwise' centre, providing language study support. All students are able to access free language courses.

5.5 The University hosts the UK's largest Volunteering Centre, accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management. This enables more than 2,500 students to undertake volunteering opportunities. The initiative has also led to students visiting, for example, Sochi University to deliver workshops on volunteering initiatives.

5.6 Students are offered the opportunity to undertake leadership courses through several programmes: a development programme of workshops, events and industrial visits within the Lancashire Business School; a week-long residential courses run at the University's Cyprus campus; an 18 month long 'Future Leaders' programme, for which widening participation is an aim and a 20 credit Certificate in Leadership Skills. The University has launched and expanded a programme of graduate internships, including a structured programme in employability and enterprise. The University offers either a paid internship or free postgraduate course to any graduate not in graduate level employment.

5.7 Students are able to develop skills in enterprise through a designated programme of activities. The University hosts a business incubation unit, offering students and graduates wishing to start their own businesses access to training and financial support. This is supported by the development of a network of 'Enterprise Champions'.

5.8 The University has reviewed and expanded its Careers Service with a renewed emphasis on working with students from the earliest possible opportunity. This has resulted in increased patronage. Careers staff are working with teaching staff to embed employability in the curriculum, for example, guest speakers and a programme of subject specific careers events.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 29-32 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#)

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality)

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx)

### Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

### Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

### Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

### Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

### Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a University) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or University title).

### Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

### **Expectations**

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FHEQIS).

### **Good practice**

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

### **Learning opportunities**

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

### **Learning outcomes**

What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

### **Multiple awards**

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

### **Operational definition**

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

### **Programme (of study)**

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

### **Programme specifications**

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

### **Public information**

Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

### **Quality Code**

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

### **Reference points**

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

### **Threshold academic standard**

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

### **Widening participation**

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2015  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel: 01452 557 000  
Email: [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

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